

# Prevent Stuttering

## (Tips & Tricks to Help Combat Stuttering)

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# Introduction

Stuttering is a speech impediment that is caused when the regular speech pattern is interrupted by repeated syllable or letter sounds. This happens when a person cannot say the word all at once. The person may also experience tremors and eye blinking while stuttering.

Stuttering can happen while they're talking to a bunch of people or to one person. In the UK, stuttering is referred to as stammering or disfluent speech.

There are about three million Americans that have been diagnosed with stuttering. It can affect anyone, but the group that it affects the most is children between the ages of 2 to 6 years old. This is the time that they are learning to talk and make sentences. In this age group, boys outnumber the girls in stuttering. With adults, the stuttering rate hovers around 1 percent.

Some research has shown that stuttering may be genetically related. However, most stuttering has seemed to produce a developmental pattern. This is in reference to young children that are just starting to speak and form words and sentences.

With them, they stutter when they try to form the right word or sentence to speak out of their mouths. Usually with this type of scenario, the children will outgrow it.

There is another type of stuttering that originates from the brain area. This is called a neurogenic disorder. The signals with the brain, nerves and muscles do not connect properly. In this case, the coordination is lacking. This type of stuttering is also present if a person is or has suffered with an injury from the brain or a stroke.

Another type of stuttering is called psychogenic. This has to do with the mind and thinking. Usually people that have some form of mental illness or related condition experience this. For a while, this type of stuttering was supposedly a major portion in regard to origination. Now, psychogenic stuttering accounts for a minimal amount.

People that stutter sometimes are apprehensive about getting to know other people or talking on the telephone due to their speech impediment.

Stuttering can be diagnosed by a speech language pathologist. This is a person that is trained to test people that may have this problem. If they have been diagnosed with it, the speech pathologist works with them to get treatment.

They work with the voice, speech and language. Also factored into this is when the stuttering came about and how it came about. The speech pathologist will conduct a thorough evaluation to see what needs to be done.

Even though there is no actual cure for this, there are treatments that are available to help with this speech disorder. Therapy can help developmental stuttering from continuing. If a child has stuttered for more than six months, the speech pathologist will conduct an evaluation to see if there is a behavioral pattern along with that.

The behavior of stuttering can be defined as a breakdown of fluent speech. Along with repetition of sound, syllables words or phrases, there are also silent blocks and sounds that take longer to pronounce.

These disorders are opposite of the normal way that people speak. It is also a fact that people who have these difficulties mentioned above will experience them on a more frequent basis. In addition to that, it takes more out of them to get their sounds out than it would a person that just speaks normally.

There is also a certain quality in regard to stuttering. The person will usually speak in a word repetition or phrases or a portion of same.

To get more detailed, stuttering can be broken down in to three different characteristics:

- **Repetition** – This is when a part of a person’s speech that can include syllables, sounds, words or phrases are repetitious. This usually happens in young children who have just started stuttering. An example of this would be “b-b-baby”.
- **Prolongations** – This refers to continuing sounds that are pronounced longer than usual. An example of this would be “rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrred”. This characteristic also happens to young children who just started stuttering.
- **Blocks** – This is unusual stoppage of sound and air. This happens when the tongue, lips or vocals stop moving. Blocks are known for happening later in life and are connected with effort and strained muscles.

Some people who stutter exhibit additional behavioral patterns that have nothing to do with their speech. They're considered behaviors that are learned and end up being connected with the superior behaviors of stuttering.

With these secondary behaviors, people that stutter try to end their speech impediment on their own. This is usually done in a physical manner, which can include:

- Blinking eyes
- Head jerking
- Hand tapping
- Less eye contact

- Mouthing things like “ah”, “um”, etc. (called starter sounds and words)

Stutterers also use secondary behaviors to avoid situations where they have to use words to be fluent in speaking. They also exhibit a sense of anxiety and fear of not speaking correctly.

Most people that stutter portray negative feelings about their condition. They have feelings of:

- Shame
- Embarrassment
- Fear
- Anger
- Frustration
- Guilt

These feelings are common for people that stutter. They can also add to their tension and effort to speak better. This may lead to them stuttering even more. Unfortunately, some stutterers may portray their feelings to other people. They start to feel self-confident because they feel that other people think that they are beneath them because of their speech condition.

### **Causes Of Developmental Stuttering**

There is not one thing that stands out as causing developmental stuttering. There have been different factors and theories that exist. There is a strong tie to genetics. Children with immediate relatives are more likely to develop stuttering.

However, studies have shown over half of those that stutter have no connection to genetics. It has been found that there are more children that stutter that have speech, language, motor or learning difficulties.

In addition to that, other factors could include:

- Cerebral palsy

- Retardation
- Stressful births of children

For those that are hearing impaired, stuttering is less apparent. Those people that are hearing impaired and stutter can improve their situation with a hearing aid. This procedure is when the feedback from a person's hearing has been adjusted. Within this technique, there is also delayed auditory feedback and frequency altered feedback.

### **Causes Of Psychogenic Stuttering**

There are several causes of this kind of stuttering. Psychogenic stuttering tends to be suddenly spontaneous and can be linked to a certain event in a person's life, such as:

- Separation of a relationship
- Bereavement of a loved one
- Traumatic event that causes a psychological or emotional reaction

This kind of stuttering is not brought on by any speech or speaking disorders. The person who is speaking isn't cognizant or concerned enough to recognize it.

# How Speech Is Coordinated

Speech starts out through muscle movements that are in sync with one another. There are different parts, such as:

- Respiration (breathing)
- Phonation (voicing)
- Articulation (palate, tongue, lips, teeth and throat)

The brain is the starting point where it controls and coordinates these particular muscle movements. The muscle movements are closely watched by hearing and touching.

Prior to a person speaking, a person takes a breath and their vocal cords will come together. The sound that comes from the voice travels through the throat and goes through the mouth when people are speaking, for the most part.

With nasal sounds, it travels through the nose. The jaw, tongue, palate and lips move in specific ways to change sounds in order to create speech sounds. With stuttering, it doesn't have to do with the creation of speech sounds, per se.

Nor it is associated with placing thoughts with words. Stuttering does not have any affect on how intelligent a person is or lack thereof. People that stutter may be some of the smartest people to ever walk the face of the earth.

# Early Signs Of Stuttering

When a child starts to stutter usually occurs between 18 to 24 months. This is around the time when they start to form sentences with words. Some parents may feel uneasy about them stuttering during this time period. However, it is a natural progression for young toddlers to stutter while they're still growing.

In fact, the stuttering may not even last. It may just be for a few weeks or a few months. It may not be something that happens every day. The majority of children that begin to stutter prior to turning five years old may only experience it for a time.

After that, the stuttering goes away by itself. There would be no need for any treatment or other therapy intervention. On the other hand, if the child continues to stutter incessantly and they have facial or body movements, you may want to see a speech language therapist to give your child a thorough evaluation.

Other things that may prompt you to consult a therapist for your child include:

- Excessive repetitions of words and phrases
- Frequent, excessive repetitions of sounds and syllables
- Words become increasingly prolonged when trying to speak
- Forced or strained effort to speak
- Speech muscles tighten when trying to speak
- Higher pitch or being loud when trying to speak
- Tries to avoid times when the child should be talking
- Other unchecked concerns about the child's speech



# How To React To People That Stutter

Stuttering is not an easy thing to overcome. For children and adults alike, it can be something that can last a long time. If you are a person that does not stutter, there are ways to make stutters feel secure:

- Don't be demeaning to those that stutter. Be patient with them and show your support. Having a speech disorder such as this can be not only embarrassing, but frustrating as well.
- Acknowledge that you're listening to what the affected person is saying. They will feel much better knowing that they have your undivided attention.
- Don't interrupt them while they are speaking. Let them finish saying what they have to say before you interject.
- If you talk to them on the telephone, give them extra time to get their words out. It will probably take them a little longer than usual to say something.

# Employment

There are some people that work in management and human resources that are not sure of what they need to do about employing or having an employee who stutters. They normally don't know how to react.

They should keep in mind some basic principles about people who stutter:

- You may work at a place or in the capacity of employing someone that stutters.
- People that stutter are just as capable, if not more, to work in any given job with the skills that they have.
- People that stutter have moved up the ladder to become successful in their careers.

If you work with someone or employ someone who stutters, remember the following things:

- People who stutter are just as bright if not more so, than those who don't.
- People that stutter are not necessarily afflicted with emotional issues and baggage.
- Just because you may work with or employ people that stutter, doesn't mean that they feel edgy or nervous for whatever reason.
- People that stutter can communicate just like people that don't. In fact, some of them are able to deal with other people on a regular basis.
- People that stutter should not be held back from promotions just because they have a speech disorder.
- It may be more difficult for a job candidate who stutters to get hired because of their speech disorder. However, they should not be put to the side because of it.
- Some people that stutter will go to great lengths to hide their speech disorder in fear that it may count against them.

There are resources available for employees that have a problem with stuttering. Most if not all companies have EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs) to help them get referrals to places that can help them with stuttering in the workplace.

People who stutter should be upfront with their employers regarding their speech disorder. They can discuss with them how they can still perform their job in the best way possible, despite the way they speak.

# What Parents Can Do For Children Who Stutter

Parents can treat developmental stuttering in their children by getting educated on what to do. They learn to restructure their child's environment in order to decrease their stuttering. Here are some things that parents are encouraged to do or not to do, in some aspects:

- Allow an environment for the child where they are allowed to freely speak. Do not limit them to certain times when they can do this. This will end up being a distraction and a source of frustration for the child.
- Do not show negative feelings or criticize how the child speaks. Don't go against them or inflict punishment because of their stuttering.
- Do not force them to repeat words until they can say them fluently.
- Do not force the child to verbally convey anything to other people.
- When the child speaks, make sure your attention is focused on them.
- Be relaxed and speak slowly. When they see a parent doing that, then they'll follow their lead.
- Give the child a chance to say the word that they're stuttering over. Don't finish their sentences for them.
- If they should happen to bring up their stuttering problem, be willing to discuss it with them. It can help them get over their fears and frustrations they are experiencing.
- Provide the child a chance to speak during times when the family is together. A good example of this is during dinner when everyone is sitting around the table.
- Do not correct the child by telling them to "slow down", "take your time" or "take a deep breath". As a parent, the intentions may be honest, but the child will not accept that well. They will start to feel self-conscious about their speaking and it will further frustrate them.
- Do not advise the child to think about what they're going to say before they say it.
- Do not expect the child to get every word or phrase on target when they're speaking. They should be able to enjoy talking despite their speech condition.

- Provide the child with as much encouragement and love as you can. Let them know that they are not any different from anyone else even with the stuttering.

# Stuttering During The School Age Years

When children start elementary school, their stuttering, for the most part, usually declines. This is because they are starting to communicate more with others. However, if the child continues to stutter, they are usually cognizant of it and may feel ashamed.

If their classmates and friends find out about their speech disorder, more attention will be drawn to it and they'll get teased endlessly.

Children like to tease as part of their routine as being children. In this life, someone will always be teased. It's better for the child to be prepared beforehand so they'll know what to expect. They will have to learn to deal with the situation on their own.

Mommy and daddy will not always be there to protect them. They have to learn how to respond in the right way and not react to what is going on. Reacting is when they get angry and want to retaliate. That's not the best way to handle the situation. They need to respond with class and confidence. The child cannot let the others know that it is bothersome. They must rise above it.

There are things that a teacher can do to help the student overcome these teasing episodes they may face:

- Talk to the student regarding the teasing episodes and find out what kind of assistance you can provide.
- Make the classroom a place where people can accept one another's differences.
- Handle teasing episodes with students in a diplomatic matter. However, keep in mind that there may be a need for additional intervention from other administration and of course, the parents.
- If you need further assistance with this, contact professionals that can help you deal with the situation. There are plenty of materials available that discuss teasing among students and how to diffuse it.
- Let the child know that you have their best interest at heart. They need to be assured that you will do everything that you can to make them feel comfortable in the classroom.
- Another thing that teachers can do is to allow the stuttering student to speak in class. They can educate the other classmates on the topic of stuttering.

They can act as an advocate and provide information that can help their classmates understand what stuttering is all about. This can help the classmates be more accepting of the student that stutters.

# Tips For Classroom Presentations About Stuttering

A presentation is a great way for other classmates to learn about stuttering. The child should do it only if they feel up to it. In no way should they be pushed into doing it if they are not ready to face an audience.

If they do decide to do it, they should work with an adult (parent, teacher, etc.) to outline the presentation. Pick out what things they wish to share with their classmates. There may be certain points that the child wants to share that can help their classmates better understand what they're going through when as a stutterer.

Here are some tips the child can use to make their presentation:

- Make a brief introduction and let the class know what you're making the presentation.
- The child should briefly explain to them what stuttering is in their own words. This way, the class will be able to understand the terminology.
- The child may want to ask if the class knows of anyone who stutters.
- Give them a short demonstration on stuttering.
- Let them know the effects that stuttering can cause, like teasing, shunning, etc. and how that makes the stutterer feel. Ask them how they would feel if someone acted that way toward them.
- Let them know that in spite of the speech disorder, that people can still live normal lives and be a success in life.
- Let the class know how they should act when they come upon someone that stutters.

These tips can help the stutterer be more confident in their presentation to the class. They would also get the respect from them because he was willing to explain how stuttering affects others. In addition to that, doing a presentation can be great therapy for the stutterer.



# Treatment For People Who Stutter

There are different treatments for people that stutter. It depends on how old they are and how serious their stuttering is. Since each person's case is different, different treatments will be needed for each person.

The purpose of them having treatment is so that they can become fluent in their speech. There are different techniques that are used to make this happen. They include:

- Airflow therapies
- Masking
- Vocal control
- Biofeedback methods
- Rhythmic speech
- Therapy for attitudes
- Techniques for anxiety reduction
- Trial therapy

There is also speech therapy, which is one of the most widely used methods of treatment that is used for people who stutter. This method deals with being taught new speech techniques (syllable-by-syllable speaking) and changing the format in which people currently speak (reducing speech rate).

In addition to that, there may be some psychological counseling involved. With this type of counseling, it can help to boost a person's self esteem. It can also help to decrease fear of speaking in front of other people.

There is also individual therapy and group therapy available. There is a definite focus on speech rate reduction. There is also input on reducing secondary behavior and emotional feelings. These things can tie in with stuttering and can have an adverse effect on that person. The person that stutters may be taught how to modify their stuttering.

## Fluency Shaping Therapy

This type of therapy refers to speaking more fluently, prolonged or connected speech. This therapy works to help people who stutter to control their breathing in order to speak more fluently. It also involves controlling their phonics and articulation. They are trained to minimize the rate at which they speak. This is done by stretching consonants and vowels. In addition to that, there is also constant airflow and soft speech contacts. The result of this technique is a fluent speech that is slow and spoken at a monotone level.

As they continue to use this technique, the rate at which they speak and their tone of voice will increase. Their voice will start to sound normal and then they can talk with other people once again. This has proven to be a success, despite the speech not sounding natural after the treatment has ended.

### **Electronic Fluency Devices**

These electronic devices can help a person have altered auditory feedback. This is when the person hears their voice in a different way. This technique has been used for many years as treatment for people that stutter.

It can be created by speaking in unison with someone else. It can also be done by masking, which is blocking out the person's voice just a little. Or it can be done by changing up the how often the feedback is presented.

There have been studies done on these techniques, and the results are mixed. Not everyone had resounding success. Some showed little to no improvement. In fact, studies showed that altered auditory feedback did not meet the criteria for the quality of the experiment.

### **Anti-Stuttering Medications**

There have been studies where certain medications were used to see if they could help in the treatment of stuttering. Some of those medications include:

- Anti-convulsants
- Anti-depressants
- Antipsychotic medications
- Anti-hypersensitive medications
- Dopamine antagonists

These medications have been used in studies for both adults and children. After the studies, it was found that only a few of these drug studies were ok.

There was only one out of the group that proved to show that stuttering could be reduced a little less than 5%. Not only that, but when these studies were conducted, it was reported that people experienced unpleasant side effects from the medication.

# Help For Young Children

Treatment for children comes in two formats. The first one is called indirect therapy. This type of therapy keys in on changing the environment in which the child has become accustomed to. This helps the child a chance to develop a fluent speech pattern.

Parents should also be involved in this as they will be counseled in regard to this type of therapy. They will be advised on what kinds of behaviors have to be changed in order for the child to maintain fluent speech.

They may have to work on decreasing or trying to eliminate stressful situations in the household. They may also have to work on not putting a demand on the child as far as their speech is concerned. Their speech rate may have to be changed as well. All of this will help the child develop a fluent speech pattern.

The second form of treatment focuses on developing fluent speech in a child. This technique is called direct therapy. This type of therapy allows a child to have skills they can use in order to improve a fluent speech pattern. When they have made improvements, the gratitude is sometimes shown in the form of a verbal response.

## Speech Therapy

It is ultimately the parent's decision as to whether or not they want their child to have speech therapy. Some parents are apprehensive about taking their child because they feel it will do more harm than good. They feel that the more they know about their stuttering, the more of an adverse affect it will have on them.

In addition to that, studies seem to show that the majority of children who stutter can outgrow it without speech therapy. On the other hand, if the child has been stuttering for a lengthy amount of time, then they may not outgrow it. In fact, it may just get worse for them. Parents have to weigh out what they feel is best for their child.

There are some speech-language pathologists that will suggest that a child get speech therapy if they stutter consistently between 6 – 12 months after the initial observance.

With speech therapy, some children can get rid of stuttering altogether. Then there are those that use techniques to help them decrease their stuttering. Other children learn to speak in an easier fashion and don't feel the tension that they used to feel when they would speak in front of other people.

One of the most important things about children having speech therapy is that they will gain more confidence when they speak in front of others. They will not be afraid to speak, even if a little stuttering comes out.

Speech therapy for a child is an important milestone for them. When a parent has decided on that, they need to find out what else they need to do in order to make this work for the child. When signing them up for speech therapy, there are few things parents should keep in mind:

- Selecting the right speech-language pathologist for the child
- Duration of treatment
- Cost of treatment
- Setting goals for success
- Measurement of success

### **Teen/Adult Goals For Speech Therapy**

When a teen or adult decides to get speech therapy, they have to realize that they will have to change their speech patterns and behaviors. They will also have to come to grips with emotions as far as how they react to situations regarding their speech disorder. They must also change their mindset about not wanting to speak in public and learning to communicate with others.

Here are some things that could be included as goals to achieve for speech therapy:

- Reduction of stuttering frequency
- Dealing with less tension and less struggling when speaking/stuttering
- Less time spent on avoiding speaking words or phrases
- Improved communication with other people and maintain eye contact;
- Decide on short-term and/or long-term goals

### **Expect The Best**

There have been many people that said for some reason, speech therapy did not work for them. Maybe they didn't exactly have the desired outcome. Or it was just an overall unpleasant experience where the patient and the speech-language pathologist didn't connect.

It might be time to try another professional that patients can share a common bond with. A professional that is knowledgeable and compassionate about helping people overcome their stuttering can go a long way. They can help teens and adults make positive strides in their life to overcome their speech disorder.

Patients have to also do their part, by doing what is asked of them. Whatever techniques are presented during the sessions should not only be implemented there, but also practicing them at home. This will help the patient become more fluent in their speech and become a more effective communicator. Not only that, they will also gain more self-confidence and self worth.

# What To Look For In A Speech-Language Pathologist

Speech-language pathologists (SLP), also called speech therapists, are clinical professionals that are trained to work with people that have some type of speech disorder. They must have plenty of knowledge about how speech therapy works in conjunction with different speech disorders.

They can be things like not being able to pronounce certain sounds, not being able to speak fluently and the rhythm of their speech is off. They also work with people that have voice difficulties.

They conduct evaluations so that they can determine what kind of speech disorder the person is dealing with.

The speech-language pathologist's day usually consists of the following:

- Conducting evaluations to determine the exact nature of the disorder; diagnosing the extent of this disorder and check out speech and language abnormalities;
- Creating a plan for each patient;
- Working with those that have a speech disorder so that they can speak more clearly and fluently;
- Teaching patients how to communicate with others;
- Help those that need to improve their speech for social, educational and employment purposes

Speech-language pathologists work with people that:

- Have problems speaking entire words and phrases, causing them to stutter;
- Cannot make clear sounds;
- Cannot speak fluently;
- Have problems with their rhythm as they try to speak;

Parents that are looking for a good candidate should learn as much about stuttering as they possible can. That way, they will have a better idea of who to select for their child. There are different publications and information on websites that can help them with this.

Parents should also look for referrals. This can be one of the best ways of finding a qualified speech-language pathologist. Also, contact hospitals, clinics, schools to get some references as well. There are some universities that have in-house speech clinics that are used for training programs.

Your child's school is also required to have speech therapy available to any child that needs it. This is mandated by the Federal Government to have this in place. Your school will be able to advise you of how to go about getting your child screened and tested for stuttering and speech therapy.

Set up interviews with potential candidates and ask questions. There are some important ones that you should also ask them. Some of the subjects include:

- Whether or not they are at ease with testing the child
- Whether or not they are ok with treating stuttering
- What their main goals are
- Different techniques and approaches
- How parents can interact with the speech-language pathologist

Once parents find one that they are comfortable with, they can start the process of getting their child the help they need to overcome their difficulties with stuttering.

### **Cost of Treatment**

Those that opt to have speech therapy will have to consider the costs involved. A lot of it depends on how much therapy is needed for the patient and the amount of time they will need it for.

After the speech-language pathologist has completed the evaluation, the decision can be made from there. A complete evaluation can cost a few hundred dollars (\$300 +), depending on several factors, such as the location of the person and what they're charging for.

When inquiring with them, ask them up front for an estimate. At least you will have an idea of what the cost will be. Also, check to see if your health insurance is eligible to cover some if not all of the costs for the therapy. You may also want to check at colleges and universities. Usually they have clinics on site where the cost is cheaper than going to a private clinician.



# Help For Teens Who Stutter

For teens who stutter, every scenario is not the same. Some may need more help than others. Whatever they need, it needs to focus on helping them improve on the communication skills.

Therapy for teens will include them working to speak more fluently. This would include having teens using techniques that would help them decrease their stuttering. Some of these techniques are:

- Easy beginnings
- Easy starts
- Smooth speech
- Light contacts

These techniques are used to help teen become more fluent in their speech. This is done by decreasing the physician tension in their speech muscles.

There is also a technique called slow speech that can be used. However, they may not adapt to this one too much because they want their speech to sound natural. Any technique that is used to assist teens in decreasing their speech disorder is welcomed, as long as it doesn't sound abnormal.

It must sound like their regular voice. They will easily adapt and use it around other people. This can also help them not to relapse if they go back to speaking where it feels more natural. This would be so even if they ended up stuttering.

Other techniques for teens include reducing physical tension when they stutter and working to decrease the seriousness of the speech disorder. The tension comes about when they tried to avoid stuttering by forcing their speech out.

This isn't a good idea because they end up stuttering more than they did before. They continue to struggle with it and become frustrated. For this, the teens would need to have therapy where they would be engaged in noticing the feeling of the tension as they speak. Then they would release it before they continued to speak some more. Some of these techniques include:

- Pulling or easing out of "blocks" of words
- "Cancellation" of stuttering moments

- Exercises for relaxing and to decrease physical tension while speaking

For teens that experience stuttering on a regular basis, they feel ashamed and embarrassed. They want to belong, but feel they can't because of their speech disorder. When they do try speak, they may get nervous or anxiety may set in.

Or they may try to avoid speaking altogether. Not only do they end up being shunned and ostracized, but it becomes easier for them to withdraw from others.

If a teen is having an extremely hard time in regard to their stuttering, they will need to have speech therapy to get a better understanding of their problems. It can help them get to the root of the things that they consider to be pressing issues.

It is not comfortable for them to continue to duck and dodge because of their stuttering. They continue to struggle with their speaking and dealing with others talking about them.

Within this therapy, they may have to incorporate "desensitization exercises". These are activities that can help teens realize that they do stutter. When they come to that realization, they will realize that they can change their situation. In addition to learning how to improve their speech, they will also learn how to lessen how they feel about stuttering.

When teens are being treated for stuttering, it may not be an easy road. There are different things that have to be considered when providing treatment and therapy for them. The purpose of teens having treatment and therapy for their stuttering is so they can freely speak and start to fit in with other teens. Teens can be a very lively bunch and if they feel limited from speaking, it doesn't help them at all.

Teens will have to play an active role in their treatment and therapy. Their parents will have to support them for working on this difficult task. Once that has been established, they can move forward and learn to communicate better.

# Help For Adults Who Stutter

Speech therapy for adults is one way that they can get help for their stuttering. The therapy is similar to what a speech-language pathologist would provide for a child or teen.

They may also have to seek psychological assistance in order for them to increase their self-esteem and self confidence. This can help them overcome the shame and fear they experience when speaking in front of other people.

It's important for the speech-language pathologist to understand how the adult is feeling. They are already frustrated and embarrassed about the situation, and coming forth talking to a total stranger is probably one of the most difficult things they've ever had to do. However, since the adult is willing to seek help, it's a good thing for them.

During speech therapy, the adult needs to express their feelings to the speech-language pathologist. They need to know that the speech-language pathologist has their best interest at heart. The pathologist's role in this is to help the adult understand the process of speech therapy and what it's about.

The adult must not avoid words or phrases that can help them to overcome their stuttering. It's important that the pathologist acts as a sounding board to help them overcome this. The adult needs to know what to expect from the therapy sessions. In order for this to work, they have to be involved in the entire process.

They should actively participate in any speech exercise that the pathologist presents to them. This will help them gain self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. Another important thing to deal with is fluency in speech. This is an important aspect in therapy.

The pathologist will have the person go through a series of exercises designed to improve their speech fluency. This is an important aspect when dealing with stuttering.

They should be learning different speech techniques, including pronouncing sounds and syllables. It may take some longer than others to actively master different speech patterns. This is not some fly-by-night procedure. It may even take adults longer to change their speech patterns and improve because they have been stuttering for so long.

Of course, there are always those that do not make much headway or any headway at all. It may be for a variety of reasons. However, if it gets to a point where the adult client is not putting forth the effort to improve in their speech, it may be time for the speech-language pathologist to part ways with them.

## Group Therapy

Another form of therapy for adults is group therapy. With this type of therapy, one of the factors that they focus on being able to shut out those that act negatively toward them in regard to their speech disorder. Group therapy can also teach adults how to maintain and improve their self confidence as they focus on improving their speech patterns.

Also in a group therapy setting, adults are taught how speech sounds regularly. A demonstration would be to break it up into sections and reworking it with speech movements that coordinate a natural fluency. The adult will be able to understand how normal speech should sound without the interference of stuttering.

Some people have been programmed to be fearful when it comes to stuttering. They think that with certain words or phrases that the stuttering will continue to repeat itself. Group therapy can help to alleviate this by helping the adult to relax and learn to control their speech muscle system.

Many times, part of the problem with stuttering in adults is that they have been conditioned to be tense and stressed when they attempt to speak. It's important for the adult to know that they don't have to submit to fear. With group therapy, they will also learn to stop avoiding certain situations, people and saying what they need to say.

Group therapy can help adults discuss their speech disorder with other people. It can help other people to know more about stuttering and maybe they will understand to be more sensitive to people that are dealing with it. Stuttering adults will be able to adapt to changes that will help them for the better.

Not only should adults be talking about stuttering, but they should do it with such confidence and assurance that they won't think twice when they start speaking. They will learn to coordinate their speaking and be able to apply it fluently.

After they've mastered the basics in group therapy, adults will be able to transfer what they've learned to the outside world. This would include their family, friends and others who they would come in contact with.

Group therapy can help adults go through the challenges that they face emotionally and mentally. They can parlay these sessions into something that will help them for many years to come.

## **Self-Treatment**

There is also another approach that adults can take in order to overcome stuttering. Self-treatment is a process where the person takes the initiative to implement steps for recovery.

First, they must understand how the speech process works. They must study how the area of the voice box, with the lips and tongues are use to create sounds. This can help to

get an insight on how people start to stutter. There are certain muscles that should have enough tension to help adults speak fluently.

When people stutter, these certain muscles have too much tension; they create a block in the vocal area. When this happens, a stuttering adult has to force themselves to speak in order to get a release. This is what causes words and phrases that come out of their mouths to sound abnormal.

When an adult realizes how this mechanism is forcing them to speak, they can work to make changes on their own. They can work with their vocal system to help them speak more clearly and fluently. This is done by concentrating and not pushing so hard to get the words and phrases out of their mouths. It won't be so hard for them to speak.

In order for adults to speak normally, they need to have air and their voice must operate efficiently. Adults can do other exercises, such as opening their mouths when they speak. They will be able to feel how it sounds when they do that.

When people stutter, the usual thing for them to do is to not open up their mouth all the way. This causes the stuttering to become more difficult over time if it continues. In essence, they're holding back sounds and words to come out of their mouths.

Even though it is known that stuttering is an embarrassing speech disorder, adults should learn to acknowledge that they have it, even though they're working on overcoming it. Not acknowledging it can cause problems down the road.

Adults have to be comfortable in knowing that the stuttering is there. On the other hand, they also have to realize that there is a light at the end of the tunnel waiting for them to go through.

It will take time for the process to change. As long as adults are ready and willing to embrace implementing changes to help them speak clearer and more fluently, then they will be ready to tackle whatever is facing them as far as stuttering is concerned.

# Research On Stuttering

There has been continued research done to see how improvements can be made as far as diagnosing this speech disorder. In addition to that, there is more work being done on treatment options and additional causes of stuttering.

One important part of this research is to try and figure out what group of children will outgrow it and which ones may not. Different characteristics are being looked at to determine who fits in what group.

This research also involves identifying different genes for the types of stuttering found in families. To do this, there are different pieces of equipment that are being used, such as PET (positron emission tomography) scans and MRI (magnetic resource imaging) scans. These scans are providing insight into the neurological area of people who stutter.

Several different kinds of treatment are also being looked at, as well as researching for new kinds of treatment for stuttering.

# Relapse

It is possible for a person to relapse after they have successfully overcome their speech disorder. They may experience a lack of control with their stuttering to a certain point. There are several reasons as to why relapses can occur:

- Lack of focus
- Termination of therapy
- Traumatic events
- Illness

A person that has relapsed doesn't have to start from scratch, but they do need to put back in place the techniques they learned to overcome this speech disorder. They must start focusing and practicing again and be consistent about doing it. They must also learn to control their emotions in certain situations and not let it get the best of them. They should also learn not to get upset if there are things that are out of their control, especially under duress or extreme stressful situations.

## **Support Groups**

Support groups and forums are available for those that need that extra boost to get by each day while dealing with this speech disorder. It can be very difficult to tough it out on their own.

Several of these groups and forums can be found just by searching the internet. It's always good to be able to share your innermost thoughts with people that are in the same boat or enduring similar situations. It can make things easier for the person and help them keep on track.



## Conclusion

Stuttering is not something that can go away overnight. Even though there is no known cure, just knowing that there are alternatives to combating this problem is a plus.

It's important that stutters surround themselves with people that are supportive of what they are dealing with. Not everyone is going to be receptive of people that have this speech disorder. It's easy for people who stutter to get discouraged because of teasing and being ostracized.

It's also important that they seek help from a qualified professional that can help them overcome the challenges they face from stuttering. With determination, action and persistence, stuttering doesn't have to be a thorn in the side forever.

# Resources

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD),  
<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/stutter.asp>

Stuttering Foundation of America, <http://www.stutteringhelp.org>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association,  
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/stuttering.htm>

The National Center For Stuttering, <http://www.stuttering.com/> (has a free e-book that you can download from the site)

National Stuttering Association, <http://www.nsastutter.org/>

Kids Health.org, <http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/stutter.html>